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THE ANTIGONE PRESENTED BY HIGH-SCHOOL PUPILS

Editor of the School Review:

The November issue of the *School Review* contains a record of a Latin play produced by the pupils of the Western High School of Detroit. I beg to furnish an account of the Greek play, the *Antigone* of Sophocles, given by the pupils of the senior class of the Trenton, N. J., high school.

As a Schiller play was given the same evening, only a condensation of the Greek text could be used, but the entire narrative was preserved, only the longest speeches and the hymns being cut. The music of Mendelssohn's opera *Antigone* was used entire in so far as it corresponded with the text employed. The male-voice choruses were too difficult; so only the choruses of the Theban maidens were sung, although some of the music of the elders was adapted for the girls. The play was given in November, 1909, but the chorus and instrumental work was begun before school closed in June. The high-school orchestra played the entire score, and was given considerable credit for its rendering of the difficult passages. The chorus sang in excellent time and rhythm, and seemed to catch the spirit of the original with remarkable intelligence.

The whole work was given under the direction of the department of public speaking, although the services of a New York operatic teacher were secured incidentally to give suggestions of pose, gesture, and step. The stage was set to conform as nearly as possible to the Greek idea, though background was obtained by using appropriate scenery from a local theater. The traditional ideas of entrance, stage grouping, marching, and oral delivery were followed in detail. Costumes entirely appropriate to the times were rented from a well-known Philadelphia dealer, although the girls in the chorus made their own dresses from plates. The art and manual-training departments furnished whatever accessories were needed. The production was given three nights to crowded houses.

Too much cannot be said in commendation of the way the principals enacted their parts. Each strove, not to excel the other, but to portray the character represented as it was thought the author conceived it. It is not an exaggeration to say that the work was not amateurish; it was scholarly. It stands to reason, of course, that high-school pupils could not have the maturity of point of view of college students, but this very lack of pedantry permitted the instructor to teach them the spirit of the original, and to retain that freshness and spontaneity of interpretation which not only gave them a conception of classic literature which they will never forget but captivated their hearers beyond their highest expectations.

MILNOR DOREY

THE HIGH SCHOOL
TRENTON, N. J.